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TAGS: MASS, TH

SUBJ: THAI MANUFACTURED HK-33 RIFLES

REF: BANGKOK 19062 (R 101202Z SEP 75)

1. SUMMARY: THE BANGKOK ENGLISH LANGUAGE, THE NATION, SEPTEMBER 25, 26, 27 AND 28 PRESENTS FRONT PAGE EXPOSE' ABOUT THE DISCREPANCIES IN THE HECKLER-KOCK PLANT AND HK-33 RIFLES QUOTE MANUFACTURED UNQUOTE IN THAILAND. END SUMMARY.

2. FULL FRONT PAGE EXPOSE' IN BANGKOK ENGLISH LANGUAGE, THE NATION, SEPTEMBER 25 IS HEADLINED QUOTE THE GREAT ARMS FRAUD UNQUOTE. THE NATION ALLEGES THAT THE REPORTED SALE OF 4,000 HK-33 RIFLES TO CHILE IS A FABRICATION DESIGNED TO SUPPORT THE CONTENTION THAT THE PLANT IS MAKING AND NOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MERELY ASSEMBLING RIFLES. THE NATION FURTHER STATES THAT THE PLANT IS INCAPABLE OF MANUFACTURING THE HK-33 DUE TO

THE FACT THAT SOME OF THE MACHINERY IS EITHER OBSOLETE OR OF THE WRONG TYPE. THE ARTICLE STATES THAT THE COST OF THE PLANT IS IN THE ORDER OF 700 MILLION BAHT, 300 MILLION BAHT MORE THAN CONTRACTED, AND IMPLICATES FORMER SUPREME COMMANDER OF THE ARMED FORCES PRAPHAT CHARUSATHIAN AND FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE ORDINANCE DEPARTMENT GENERAL THAWIT SENIWONG. THE ARTICLE FURTHER STATES THAT THE CABINET IN 1970, AND NOW, WAS UNAWARE OF THE DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN THE PROJECTED OUTPUT AND THE ACTUAL CAPABILITY OF THE PLANT. IT ASKS WHETHER GENERAL KRIT SIWARA, DEFENSE MINISTER PRAMAN ADIREKSARN AND DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER ADMIRAL KAMOL SITAKALIN ARE AWARE OF THESE DISCREPANCIES.

3. IN FOLLOW-UP FRONT PAGE ARTICLE SEPTEMBER 26, THE NATION STATES THAT, ACCORDING TO GENERAL THAWIT SENIWONG ALL OF THE HK-33 RIFLES ISSUED BY THE RTA HAVE EITHER BEEN IMPORTED FINISHED FROM GERMANY OR HAVE BEEN ASSEMBLED IN THAILAND WITHOUT LOCALLY MADE PARTS. HOWEVER, IT QUOTES THE RETIRED GENERAL AS CLAIMING THAT THE PLANT IS NOW CAPABLE OF PRODUCING THE RIFLE WITH LOCALLY MANUFACTURED PARTS AS SPECIFIED IN THE CONTRACT.

4. THE NATION'S SEPTEMBER 26 EDITORIAL IS TITLED QUOTE WHAT'S BEHIND THIS SCANDAL UNQUOTE. IT POINTS OUT THAT PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT AS A JOURNALIST IN 1970, WROTE AGAINST THE HK-33 PROJECT BUT HAS NOW OBVIOUSLY CHAIRED THE RTG CABINET MEETING WHICH APPROVED THE SALE OF 4,000 RIFLES TO CHILE (REFTEL). THE EDITORIAL FURTHER MAKES A POINT THAT THE THAI MILITARY AND POLICE FORCES ARE COMPLAINING THAT THEY NEED MODERN RIFLES AND THE RTG STILL DEPENDS UPON THE AMERICANS FOR THIS MILITARY AID. IT ALSO SUGGESTS THAT THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ASK FOR A COMPLETE EXPLANATION FROM GENERAL PRAMAN, MINISTER OF DEFENSE, SO THAT THE PUBLIC CAN LEARN ALL OF THE FACTS. NOTE: THE TWO EDITIONS CONTRADICT EACH OTHER OVER THE STATUS OF THE HK-33 SALE TO CHILE. IN THE SEPTEMBER 25 ARTICLE THE NATION STATES THAT THE REPORT OF SALE WAS FAKE, WHILE THE SEPTEMBER 26 EDITORIAL REPORTS THAT THE SALE OBTAINED CABINET APPROVAL.

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5. THE FRONT PAGE ARTICLE SEPTEMBER 27 DWELLS ON DIFFERING COPIES OF THE THAI-HK CONTRACT AND NOTES THAT THE ORIGINAL COPY HAS NOT BEEN MADE PUBLIC. GENERAL THAWIT CLAIMS THAT A COPY STOLEN FROM THE RTA ORDANCE DEPARTMENT'S FILES WAS A FAKE AND THE ORIGINAL COPY IS WITH THE JUDGE- ADVOCATE DEPARTMENT. THE NATION'S SOURCES SAY THAT THE COPY WITH THE JUDGE-ADVOCATE DEPARTMENT IS FAKE BUT THAT THE ORIGINAL DOES EXIST.

7. ON SEPTEMBER 28, THE FRONT PAGE ARTICLE OF THE NATION

UNRELENTINGLY ALLEGES THAT THE THAI DECISION TO PRODUCE THE HK-33 IN 1970 PROVOKED A STRONG PROTEST FROM USG, AND THAT THE DECISION WAS ONE FACTOR IN THE SHARP CURTAILMENT OF U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THAILAND.

8. COMMENT: THE FACTS ABOUT THE HECKLER-KOCK PLANT, WELL-KNOW AMONG THE MILITARY AND ARMS DEALERS HERE IN BANGKOK, ARE NOW BEING MADE PUBLIC BY THE MEDIA. IT APPEARS THAT THE NATION HAS A VIABLE ISSUE WHICH THEY CAN PURSUE IN AN EFFORT TO EXPOSE RTG SENIOR OFFICERS, BOTH RETIRED AND ACTIVE DUTY, WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THIS THAI VENTURE INTO THE ARMAMENT INDUSTRY. MASTERS

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